

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 1388

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SF
SUBJ: SECURITY POLICE CHIEF BRIEFS PRESS ON TERRORIST THREAT

1. SUMMARY: SOUTH AFRICAN SECURITY POLICE CHIEF, BRIGADIER C.F. ZIETSMAN, HELD A PRESS SUMMARY ON THE SUBJECT OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN SOUTH AFRICA. IN HIS REPORT, ZIETSMAN DISPLAYED ITEMS CONFISCATED BY SECURITY POLICE RANGING FROM SUBMACHINE GUNS TO SMUGGLED EXPLOSIVES. ZIETSMAN ALSO SUMMARIZED THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF TERRORIST MOVEMENTS (BASICALLY ANC AND PAC) AND REVIEWED ASSESSMENTS OF THEIR STRENGTH. END SUMMARY.

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2. BRIGADIER C.F. ZIETSMAN, CHIEF OF SOUTH AFRICAN SECURITY POLICE, GAVE AN APPARENTLY CANDID ASSESSMENT OF TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA AS AN APPARENT FURTHER STEP IN THE CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE THE "AWARENESS" OF SOUTH AFRICANS TO THE DANGER OF TERRORIST ACTIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. ZIETSMAN DISPLAYED CONFISCATED WEAPONS RANGING FROM A CZECHOSLOVAKIAN VZ25 MACHINE GUN TO

F1-TYPE HANDGRENADES, RG-42 HANDGRENADES, BARS OF TNT, CONTAINERS OF PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE DISGUISED AS ORDINARY HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS, AMMUNITION AND BOMB MAKING KITS.

3. ZIETSMAN ESTIMATED TOTAL TERRORIST STRENGTH AT APPROXIMATELY 4,000, WITH THREE-QUARTERS OF THEM ANC AND THE REMAINDER LARGELY PAC. HE SAID COUNTRIES CURRENTLY GIVING SANCTUARY AND TRAINING TO WOULD-BE-TERRORISTS INCLUDED: ANGOLA, LIBYA, TANZANIA, AND MOZAMBIQUE, AS WELL AS THE SOVIET UNION AND THE EASTERN BLOC. WHILE CONCEDED THAT NOT ALL WERE ACTIVELY UNDERGOING TERRORIST TRAINING, ZIETSMAN ALLEGED "IN THE END THE ARE ALL EARMARKED FOR MILITARY TRAINING."

4. ZIETSMAN WARNED SOUT AFRICANS TO EXPECT AN INCREASE IN URBAN TERRORISM AS A "NATURAL RESULT" OF THE MANY SOWETO REFUGEES WHO FLED AFTER JUNE 1976. HE SAID TIGHTER SURVEILLANCE OF THE BORDERS AND A LACK OF TRAINING IN TERROR WARFARE (ONLY A FEW MONTHS IN MOST CASES) MEANT THE SITUATION WAS STILL IN HAND FROM A POLICE SECURITY PERSPECTIVE AND SOUTH AFRICA COULD ONLY EXPECT GREATER VIOLENCE OVER TIME AS MORE EXPLOSIVES AND TERRORIST RECRUITS WERE SMUGGLED BACK INTO THE COUNTRY.

5. COMMENT: WHILE ZIETSMAN'S BRIEFING WAS (AS BEST WE CONFIDENTIAL

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CAN TELL) AND ACCURATE REFLECTION OF POLICE CONCERNS, ITS PURPOSE WAS CLEARLY TO JAR SOUTH AFRICANS INTO A MORE CONCERNED FRAME OF MIND ABOUT SECURITY, AS WELL AS PROVIDE SOME JUSTIFICATION FOR THE SOMETIMES BRUTAL METHODS OF THE SECURITY POLICE. WHILE THERE IS SOME QUESTION AS TO WHETHER ZIETSMAN MAY NOT HAVE SOMEWHAT OVERSTATED THE TERRORIST THREAT (PARTICULARLY WHEN COMPARED TO AMBASSADOR SPAIN'S RECENT DESCRIPTIONS TO US OF THE RELATIVELY INDIFFERENT RECEPTION SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEES RECEIVE IN TANZANIA), IT IS CLEAR THE POLICE EXPECT AND, IN FACT, ARE GEARED FOR MEETING THE THREAT HEAD ON. SOWETO CHIEF JAN VISSER REFLECTED THEIR CONCERNS TO US RECENTLY WHEN HE REVEALED THAT SOWETO POLICE WERE ENCOUNTERING STOCKPILES OF WEAPONS AND EXPLOSIVES WITH FAR MORE FREQUENCY THESE DAYS THAN IN THE PAST. NONETHELESS, IT SEEMS CLEAR THE POLICE CONTINUE TO HAVE A FIRM GRIP ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN INTERNAL SECURITY QUESTION.
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